

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4680

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 1399

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, SHUM, AR
SUBJECT: ARGENTINE PARTICIPANTS IN DEMOCRATIC
OPTIONS CONFERENCE

REF: STATE 045443

1. SUMMARY: ACCORDING TO EMBASSY FILES, MOST OF THE ARGENTINES INVITED TO THE COHA-SPONSORED CONFERENCE ARE KNOWN TO HAVE BEEN LEFTIST-LEANING, BUT FAR FROM SUBVERSIVE. SANTIAGO DIAZ ORTIZ AND HIPOLITO SOLARI IRIGOYEN WERE CLOSELY CONNECTED TO THE NOW OUTLAWED PERONIST YOUTH ORGANIZATION; ESTEBAN RIGHI WAS THE RATHER INEFFECTUAL COLLEAGUE OF HECTOR CAMPORA; HECTOR SANDLER HAS A QUIRKY CENTER-LEFT POLITICAL PAST; ADOLFA GAS IS NOT WELL KNOWN. SOLARI IRIGOYEN WAS RELEASED FROM PRISON AND EXPELLED FROM ARGENTINA IN MAY, 1977; SEVERAL OF THE OTHERS LEFT ARGENTINA BEFORE THE PRESENT MILITARY REGIME TOOK POWER. WE DO NOT BELIEVE A VISIT WITH ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN WOULD BE USEFUL AT THIS TIME. END SUMMARY.

2. FOLLOWING IS A SUMMARY OF THE BIO INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO US:

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(A) HECTOR SANDLER: FORMER SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE UDELPA PARTY (NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE UNION OF THE ARGENTINE PEOPLE), A SELF-DESCRIBED CENTER-LEFT PARTY WHICH WAS FORMER PRESIDENT ARAMBURU'S POLITICAL VEHICLE; FORMER NATIONAL DEPUTY WHO WAS KNOWN AS AN ECCENTRIC, EGOCENTRIC AND PROBLEMATIC BUT POLITICALLY SAAVY LEGISLATOR. SANDLER WAS

REPORTEDLY ON THE "TRIPLE A DEATH LIST" DURING THE PERONIST ADMINISTRATION AND IS NOW IN EXILE IN MEXICO, WHERE HE IS DIRECTOR OF THE ARGENTINES IN-EXILE NEWS-SHEET "TRIBUNA DEMOCRATICA." SANDLER SPOKE AT THE HARKIN-MCGOVERN CONGRESSSIONAL CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN WASHINGTON IN SEPTEMBER, 1977, WHERE HE CRITICIZED THE MILITARY REGIME'S FAILURE TO RETURN THE COUNTRY TO A DEMOCRATIC, ELECTED GOVERNMENT. SANDLER IS A LAWYER AND WAS IN THE AIR FORCE UNTIL 1956 BEFORE ENTERING POLITICS.

(B) SANTIAGO DIAZ ORTIZ: FORMER PERONIST DEPUTY WITH TIES TO PERONIST YOUTH, THE GROUP LATER REPUDIATED BY PERON WHICH PROVIDED CONSIDERABLE NUMBER OF SYMPATHIZERS AND ACTIVISTS TO THE MONTONEROS. DIAZ ORTIZ RESIGNED ALONG WITH SEVEN OTHER LEFTIST PERONIST DEPUTIES IN 1974, WHEN PERON STEPPED UP ATTACKS AGAINST LEFTIST TERRORISTS AND TRIED TO REFORM THE PENAL CODE TO COMBAT TERRORISM. WE HAVE AN ADDITIONAL NOTATION IN OUR FILES THAT HE WAS ALSO A MEMBER OF THE "LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE FOR THE RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS"--PRESUMABLY DURING HIS PERIOD AS DEPUTY.

(C) ADOLFO GASS: FORMER NATIONAL DEPUTY OF THE RADICAL PARTY; AS VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES' FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE, HE CALLED ON ARGENTINE MILITARY FORCEABLY TO OCCUPY THE MALVINAS ISLANDS. GASS IS ONE OF THE FOUNDERS OF THE "COMMITTEE TO COORDINATE DEMOCRATIC FORCES IN THE SOUTHERN CONE" CONFIDENTIAL

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LAUNCHED IN CARACAS IN AUGUST, 1977, WHICH CALLED FOR THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF DEMOCRATIC PLURALISM IN ARGENTINA. HE IS ALSO PRESIDENT OF AN "ARGENTINE SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE" SETUP TO OPPOSE THE CURRENT REGIME.

(D) ESTEBAN RIGHI: FORMER INTERIOR MINISTER IN HECTOR CAMPORA GOVERNMENT IN 1973; A LEFTIST LAWYER WITH CLOSE TIES TO THE CAMPORA FAMILY, RIGHI ASSUMED HIS POST AT AGE 35 AND WAS CONSIDERED TO BE INEXPERIENCED AND EXPENDABLE (SEE PARAGRAPH 3 BELOW). HE LEFT ARGENTINA IN THE FACE OF RISING RIGHT-WING VIOLENCE IN OCTOBER, 1974 AND SETTLED IN EXILE IN MEXICO. RIGHI HAS WRITTEN FOR HECTOR SANDLER'S EXILE NEWS-SHEET TRIBUNA DEMOCRATICA, PUBLISHED IN MEXICO.

(E) HIPOLITO SOLARI IRIGOYEN: FORMER SENATOR FOR RADICAL PARTY AND DEFENSE LAWYER WITH STRONG TIES TO LABOR GROUPS, SOLARI IRIGOYEN WAS IDENTIFIED WITH THE LEFT WING OF THE UCR AND WITH THE PERONIST YOUTH, AND HE SERVED AS DEFENSE LAWYER FOR ACCUSED TERRORISTS. SOLARI IRIGOYEN WAS OBJECT OF SEVERAL TERRORIST (RIGHT-WING?) ATTACKS AND BOMBINGS IN THE PAST; HE WAS ABDUCTED, DISAPPEARED AND LATER REAPPEARED IN CUSTODY OF THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT FROM AUGUST, 1976 TO MAY,

1977 WHEN HE WAS EXPELLED TO VENEZUELA AS RESULT OF STRONG
INTERNATIONAL (INCLUDING U.S.) PRESSURE. SOLARI IRIGOYEN WAS

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 1399

ACCUSED OF "DEFENDING TERRORISTS" BY THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT
BUT HAS A REPUTATION AS A DEDICATED DEMOCRAT AND FIRM BELIEVER
IN PEACE AND DUE PROCESS. HE VISITED WITH DEPUTY SECRETARY
CHRISTOPHER, ASSISTANT SECRETARIES TODMAN AND DERIAN ON VISIT
TO U.S. IN JULY 1977. (GOA PROTESTED AGAINST USG OFFICIALS
RECEIVING SOLARI IRIGOYEN, WHOM THEY IDENTIFIED AS A "TERRORIST
ACCOMPLICE.") SOLARI IRIGOYEN HAS SPOKEN OUT AGAINST THE
MILITARY REGIME AND HIS OWN SUFFERINGS IN DETENTION IN EUROPE
AND IN SOUTH AMERICAN COUNTRIES. FOR EXAMPLE, HE WAS REPORTED
IN PARIS AS SAYING THAT THE FRENCH NUNS WERE KIDNAPPED BY
"ARGENTINE PARAMILITARY FORCES" LIKE 15,000 OTHER PRISONERS IN
ARGENTINA. IN JULY, 1977, HOWEVER, AT A EUROPEAN LATIN
AMERICAN CONFERENCE IN MEXICO HE REFUSED TO SIGN A STATEMENT
CONDEMNING ARGENTINA BECAUSE MONTONEROS--WHOM HE REJECTS FOR
THEIR VIOLENT PRACTICES AND POLITICAL AIMS--WERE REPRESENTED AT
THE MEETING.

3. EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN'S MEETING
WITH THIS GROUP WOULD NOT BE WORTH THE BAD FEELING IT WOULD
STIR UP WITHIN THE GOA AND AMONG ARGENTINES WHO LOOK BACK WITH
DISMAY ON THE COUNTRY'S POLITICAL HISTORY DURING THE TIME
THESE MEN WERE PROMINENT. ALSO, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF SOLARI
IRIGOYEN, WHO HAS BEEN RECEIVED BEFORE AT A HIGH LEVEL IN THE
DEPARTMENT, THE OTHER POLITICIANS DO NOT HAVE MUCH OF A
POLITICAL FOLLOWING IN ARGENTINA. RIGHI IS REMEMBERED BY
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OBJECTIVE POLITICAL OBSERVERS AS HAVING BEEN UNWISE ENOUGH TO ACCEPT THE INTERIOR MINISTRY UNDER CAMPORA AND TO HAVE BEEN INVOLVED, AT LEAST BY HIS ACQUIESCENCE, IN THE FATEFUL DECISION TO EMPTY THE JAILS OF A LARGE NUMBER OF TERRORISTS ON CAMPORA'S INAUGURAL DAY. RIGHI--WHETHER RIGHTFULLY OR WRONGFULLY--TOOK THE RAP FOR THIS DECISION, WHICH LED TO A WAVE OF TERRORIST BLOODLETTING THE SAME DAY, EVER SINCE USED BY THE ARGENTINE MILITARY AS JUSTIFICATION FOR RESPONDING WITH A COUNTER-TERROR OF THEIR OWN. ALL OF THE FIVE ARE POLITICIANS OF THE LEFT WHO, WHILE CERTAINLY NOT EXTREMISTS THEMSELVES, MAINTAINED, FOR WHATEVER REASON, CERTAIN POLITICAL CONNECTIONS TO GROUPS RECOGNIZED AS ADVOCATES OF VIOLENCE. TO THE CURRENT REGIME AND A GREAT MANY ARGENTINES THIS IS TANTAMOUNT TO BEING A SYMPATHIZER OR AGENT OF TERRORISM. SHOULD THERE APPEAR TO BE IMPERATIVE REASONS THAT THE GROUP BE RECEIVED IN THE DEPARTMENT, WE RECOMMEND THIS BE ACCOMPLISHED AT LOWER THAN THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY'S LEVEL.

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